2

4 5

6 7

8

10

11 12

13

14

15 16

17

18

19

20

21 22

23

24

25

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 2. Jurisdiction of this court arises pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d), which states that such actions may be brought and heard before "any appropriate United States district court without regard to the amount in controversy," and 28 U.S.C. § 1331 grants this court original jurisdiction of all civil actions arising under the laws of the United States.
- 3. Defendant conducts business in the State of New Jersey and therefore, personal jurisdiction is established.
 - 4. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1).
 - 5. Declaratory relief is available pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

PARTIES

- 6. Plaintiff is a natural person residing in Pennsauken, New Jersey, 08110.
- 7. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).
- 8. Defendant is a national debt collection company with corporate headquarters located at 8014 Bayberry Road, Jacksonville, Florida, 32256.
- 9. Defendant is a "debt collector" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6), and repeatedly contacted Plaintiff in an attempt to collect a debt.
- 10. Defendant acted through its agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors, assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, representatives, and insurers.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

11. The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("FDCPA") is a comprehensive statute, which prohibits a catalog of activities in connection with the collection of debts by third parties.

See 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq. The FDCPA imposes civil liability on any person or entity that violates its provisions, and establishes general standards of debt collector conduct, defines abuse, and provides for specific consumer rights. 15 U.S.C. § 1692k. The operative provisions of the FDCPA declare certain rights to be provided to or claimed by debtors, forbid deceitful and misleading practices, prohibit harassing and abusive tactics, and proscribe unfair or unconscionable conduct, both generally and in a specific list of disapproved practices.

- 12. In particular, the FDCPA broadly enumerates several practices considered contrary to its stated purpose, and forbids debt collectors from taking such action. The substantive heart of the FDCPA lies in three broad prohibitions. First, a "debt collector may not engage in any conduct the natural consequence of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse any person in connection with the collection of a debt." 15 U.S.C. § 1692d. Second, a "debt collector may not use any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt." 15 U.S.C. § 1692e. And third, a "debt collector may not use unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt." 15 U.S.C. § 1692f. The FDCPA is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous collectors, whether or not there exists a valid debt, broadly prohibits unfair or unconscionable collection methods, conduct which harasses, oppresses or abuses any debtor, and any false, deceptive or misleading statements in connection with the collection of a debt.
- 13. In enacting the FDCPA, the United States Congress found that "[t]here is abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors," which "contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy." 15 U.S.C. § 1692a. Congress

additionally found existing laws and procedures for redressing debt collection injuries to be inadequate to protect consumers. 15 U.S.C. § 1692b.

14. Congress enacted the FDCPA to regulate the collection of consumer debts by debt collectors. The express purposes of the FDCPA are to "eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses." 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 15. At all relevant times, Defendant was attempting to collect an alleged consumer debt from Plaintiff.
- 16. The alleged debt at issue arose out of transactions, which were primarily for personal, family, or household purposes.
- 17. Beginning in or before January 2011 and continuing through February 2011, Defendant made continuous and repeated calls to Plaintiff's cellular telephone number in an attempt to collect a consumer debt from Plaintiff.
- 18. Plaintiff received telephone calls and voicemail messages from Defendant on a number of occasions including but not limited to, calls on January 7, 2011 at 4:48 p.m.; January 12, 2011 at 5:32 p.m. and 5:33 p.m.; January 18, 2011 at 2:19 p.m. and 2:20 p.m.; January 25, 2011 at 12:55 p.m.; February 1, 2011 at 1:00 p.m.; and February 8, 2011 at 6:46 p.m., from the following phone number: (800) 496-4598, which the undersigned has confirmed is a phone number for Defendant.
 - 19. Further, when contacting Plaintiff on his cellular telephone, upon information and

belief, Defendant used an automated telephone dialing system or pre-recorded or artificial voice.

- 20. Plaintiff did not expressly consent to Defendant's placement of telephone calls to his cellular telephone by the use of an automatic telephone dialing system or pre-recorded or artificial voice prior to Defendant's placement of the calls.
- 21. None of Defendant's telephone calls placed to Plaintiff were for "emergency purposes," as specified in 47 U.S.C. §227(b)(1)(A).
- 22. On January 25, 2010, 12:55 p.m. and February 8, 2011, 6:46 p.m., Defendant contacted Plaintiff and left a pre-recorded voicemail messages on his cellular phone, providing him a reference no. "39744636," but not informing him that the call was an "attempt to collect a debt."
- 23. After the initial correspondence with Defendant back in January 2011, Plaintiff has still not received a letter notifying him of his rights and privileges under the law, specifically the right to dispute and/or request verification of the alleged debt.
- 24. Defendant's actions in attempting to collect the alleged debt were harassing, abusive and highly deceptive.

CONSTRUCTION OF APPLICABLE LAW

THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

25. The FDCPA is a strict liability statute. <u>Taylor v. Perrin, Landry, deLaunay & Durand</u>, 103 F.3d 1232 (5th Cir. 1997). "Because the Act imposes strict liability, a consumer need not show intentional conduct by the debt collector to be entitled to damages." <u>Russell v. Equifax A.R.S.</u>, 74 F. 3d 30 (2d Cir. 1996); <u>see also Gearing v. Check Brokerage Corp.</u>, 233

F.3d 469 (7th Cir. 2000) (holding unintentional misrepresentation of debt collector's legal status violated FDCPA); <u>Clomon v. Jackson</u>, 988 F. 2d 1314 (2d Cir. 1993).

- 26. The FDCPA is a remedial statute, and therefore must be construed liberally in favor of the debtor. Sprinkle v. SB&C Ltd., 472 F. Supp. 2d 1235 (W.D. Wash. 2006). The remedial nature of the FDCPA requires that courts interpret it liberally. Clark v. Capital Credit & Collection Services, Inc., 460 F. 3d 1162 (9th Cir. 2006). "Because the FDCPA, like the Truth in Lending Act (TILA) 15 U.S.C §1601 et seq., is a remedial statute, it should be construed liberally in favor of the consumer." Johnson v. Riddle, 305 F. 3d 1107 (10th Cir. 2002).
- 27. The FDCPA is to be interpreted in accordance with the "least sophisticated" consumer standard. See Jeter v. Credit Bureau, Inc., 760 F.2d 1168 (11th Cir. 1985); Graziano v. Harrison, 950 F. 2d 107 (3rd Cir. 1991); Swanson v. Southern Oregon Credit Service, Inc., 869 F.2d 1222 (9th Cir. 1988). The FDCPA was not "made for the protection of experts, but for the public that vast multitude which includes the ignorant, the unthinking, and the credulous, and the fact that a false statement may be obviously false to those who are trained and experienced does not change its character, nor take away its power to deceive others less experienced." Id. The least sophisticated consumer standard serves a dual purpose in that it ensures protection of all consumers, even naive and trusting, against deceptive collection practices, and protects collectors against liability for bizarre or idiosyncratic interpretations of collection notices. Clomon, 988 F. 2d at 1318.

THE TELEPHONE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 1991

- 28. In 1991, Congress enacted the TCPA, in response to a growing number of consumer complaints regarding certain telemarketing practices.
- 29. The TCPA regulates, among other things, the use of automated telephone equipment, or "autodialers." Specifically, the plain language of section 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) prohibits the use of autodialers to make any call to a wireless number in the absence of an emergency or the prior express consent of the called party.
- 30. According to findings by the Federal Communication Commission ("FCC"), the agency Congress vested with authority to issue regulations implementing the TCPA, such calls are prohibited because, as Congress found, automated or prerecorded telephone calls are a greater nuisance and invasion of privacy than live solicitation calls, and such calls can be costly and inconvenient. The FCC also recognized that wireless customers are charged for incoming calls whether they pay in advance or after the minutes are used.
- 31. On January 4, 2008, the FCC released a Declaratory Ruling wherein it confirmed that autodialed and prerecorded message calls to a wireless number by a creditor (or on behalf of a creditor) are permitted only if the calls are made with the "prior express consent" of the called party. The FCC "emphasize[d] that prior express consent is deemed to be granted only if the wireless number was provided by the consumer to the creditor, and that such number was provided during the transaction that resulted in the debt owed."

COUNT I

DEFENDANT VIOLATED THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

32. In its actions to collect a disputed debt, Defendant violated the FDCPA in one or more of the following ways:

- a. Defendant violated of the FDCPA generally;
- b. Defendant violated §1692d of the FDCPA by harassing Plaintiff in connection with the collection of an alleged debt;
- c. Defendant violated §1692d(5) of the FDCPA, when it caused the Plaintiff's telephone to ring repeatedly or continuously with the intent to harass, annoy or abuse Plaintiff;
- d. Defendant violated §1692e of the FDCPA by using false, deceptive, or misleading representations or means in connection with the collection of a debt;
- e. Defendant violated §1692e(11) of the FDCPA by failing to disclose in subsequent communications that the communication is from a debt collector;
- f. Defendant violated §1692f of the FDCPA by using unfair and unconscionable means with Plaintiff to collect or attempt to collect a debt;
- g. Defendant violated § 1692g of the FDCPA by failing to send written notification, within five (5) days after its initial communication with Plaintiff, advising Plaintiff of her rights to dispute the debt or request verification of the debt; and
- h. Defendant acted in an otherwise deceptive, unfair and unconscionable manner and failed to comply with the FDCPA.

COUNT II

DEFENDANT VIOLATED THE TELEPHONE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

35. Plaintiff hereby incorporates all facts and allegations specified in all preceding paragraphs, by reference as if fully set forth at length.

- 24
- 25

- The Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA"), codified at 47 U.S.C. § 227 36. et seq., prohibits the use of an automated or pre-recorded voice to a consumer on any number assigned to a cellular phone. See 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii).
- A person may bring a private cause of action "based on a violation of this 37. subsection or the regulations prescribed under this subsection to enjoin such violation" under § 227(b)(3)(A) of the TCPA.
- A person is entitled to bring "an action to recover for actual monetary loss from 38. such a violation, or to receive \$500 in damages for each such violation, whichever is greater" under $\S 227(c)(5)(B)$ of the TCPA.
- 39. The Court, in its discretion, is authorized to award up to three (3) times the actual damages sustained for Defendant's violations by § 227(c)(5) of the TCPA.
- Defendant repeatedly and regularly placed automated calls to Plaintiff's cellular 40. telephone, leaving several pre-recorded or automated messages.
- Defendant's conduct violated § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) of the TCPA by making any call 41. using any automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial prerecorded voice to a telephone number assigned to a cellular telephone service.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, JAMES DURST, respectfully prays for a judgment as follows:

- All actual compensatory damages suffered pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § a. 1692k(a)(1);
- Statutory damages of \$1,000.00 for the violation of the FDCPA pursuant b. to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A);
- All reasonable attorneys' fees, witness fees, court costs and other litigation c. costs incurred by Plaintiff pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1693k(a)(3);
- Statutory damages of \$500 for each violation of the TCPA, pursuant to 47 d. U.S.C. $\S 227(c)(5)(B)$; and

1 Any other relief deemed appropriate by this Honorable Court. e. 2 3 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL** 4 PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that Plaintiff, JAMES DURST, demands a jury trial in this 5 case. 6 7 **CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO L.CIV.R.11.2** 8 I hereby certify pursuant to Local Civil Rule 11.2 that this matter in controversy is not 9 subject to any other action pending in any court, arbitration or administrative proceeding. 10 11 RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED, 12 DATED: 05/31/11 13 KIMMEL & SILVERMAN, P.C. 14 By: /s/ Amy L. Bennecoff 15 Amy L. Bennecoff Attorney ID # AB 0891 16 Kimmel & Silverman, P.C 1930 E. Marlton Pike, Suite O29 17 Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08003 Phone: (856) 429-8334 18 Facsimile (856) 216-7344 Email: abennecoff@creditlaw.com 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 - 10 -

SJS 44 (Rev. 12/07)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS					
JAMES DURST	1	ENHANCED RECOVERY COMPANY, LLC							
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)			Cou	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.					
(c) Attorney's (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)			Atto	rneys (If Known)					
Amy L. Bennecoff, Esq		• • • •							
Pike, Suite Q29, Cherry	Hill, New Jersey 080	003, 215-540-888							
II. BASIS OF JURISI	III. CITIZE		PRINCIPA	L PARTIES			aintiff		
☐ 1 U.S. Government			(For Diversity Cases Only) PTF DEF Citizen of This State						
☐ 2 U.S. Government ☐ 4 Diversity Defendant			Citizen of An	other State	0 2 0 2	Incorporated and F of Business In A		5 5	5
	Citizen or Subject of a					060	6		
IV. NATURE OF SUI	TO		Lonwin	(D. 7/2003)					
☐ 110 Insurance				URE/PENALTY		KRUPTCY		STATUTES	C. Series
□ 110 Insurance □ 120 Marine □ 130 Miller Act □ 140 Negotiable Instrument □ 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment □ 151 Medicare Act □ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans) □ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits □ 160 Stockholders' Suits □ 190 Other Contract □ 195 Contract Product Liability □ 196 Franchise ■ REAL PROPERTY □ 210 Land Condemnation □ 220 Foreclosure □ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment □ 240 Torts to Land □ 245 Tort Product Liability □ 290 All Other Real Property	Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury CIVIL RIGHTS 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 444 Welfare 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment	PERSONAL INJUR □ 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice □ 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability □ 368 Asbestos Persona Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPER □ 370 Other Fraud □ 371 Truth in Lending □ 380 Other Personal Property Damage □ 385 Property Damage Product Liability PRISONER PETITION □ 510 Motions to Vacata Sentence Habeas Corpus: □ 530 General □ 535 Death Penalty □ 540 Mandamus & Oth □ 550 Civil Rights □ 555 Prison Condition		Food & Drug telated Seizure berty 21 USC 881 Laws Truck Regs. ational //Health ABOR dbor Standards Mgmt. Relations Mgmt. Reporting osure Act y Labor Act Labor Litigation Ret. Inc. y Act GRATION lization Applicatior Corpus - etainee mmigration	820 Copyr 830 Patent 840 Trader 840 Trader 861 HlA () 862 Black 863 DIWC 864 SSID () 865 RSI () 870 Taxes or Def 871 IRS—26 USG	rawal C 157 IY RIGHTS Ights Ights	3480 Consume	d Banking cee ion and Banking cee ion er Influenced a Organizations er Credit it TV 5 Service ss/Commoditie e r Challenge 3410 atutory Action and Acts c Stabilization mental Matter Allocation Act of Informatio f Fee Determingual Access etionality of	es/ ns n Act rs t
□ 2 Re	ate Court	Appellate Court	J 4 Reinstated of Reopened	anoth (speci	ify)	☐ 6 Multidistr Litigation	ict 🗇 7 Ju	ppeal to Dis adge from agistrate adgment	trict
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION			re tiling (Do not	cite jurisdiction	al statutes un	less diversity):			
VI. CAUSE OF ACTI	Brief description of ca	use: ction Practices Ad	ct						
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: ☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23			DEMAN	MAND \$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No					
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKET	NUMBER			
DATE		SIGNATURE OF AT	TORNEY OF REC	ORD					
05/31/2011		/s/ Amy L. Benr	necoff						
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY									
RECEIPT # A	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUD	OGE		